Nixon to Remain Aloof From 'Bugging' Hassle

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — The White House asserts President Nixon "won't get involved at all" in the controversy over the arrest for burglary in the national offices of the Democratic Party of an employe of the Nixon Re-election Committee.

Democratic National Chairman Lawrence F. O'Brien filed a $1 million damage suit Tuesday against the Nixon committee and five men arrested early Saturday at O'Brien's headquarters. He said a "clear line to the White House" was developing in the incident.

THE ARRESTED men carried electronic bugging equipment and cameras. One of them, James W. McCord Jr., a former CIA and FBI employe, served as the salaried chief of security for the Nixon Re-election Committee and worked under contract for the Republican National Committee.

O'Brien also said, without elaborating, that it had become apparent that "there's been more than one incident" of surveillance of the Democrats. He said the incident at his office was part of "a continuing, long-term activity."

But White House Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler responded to reporters' questions Tuesday by saying he was going "to reject every attempt to inject this matter in the White House."

"IT'S SOMETHING we don't condone," Ziegler said. "We don't like to see people running around bugging offices."

Ziegler said he believed the President "has read with interest about this matter and is confident that the full process of law will run its course." But he said he would "leave the comment to Mr. O'Brien and other political types."

The O'Brien reference to a clear line to the White House was prompted by published reports that notebooks belonging to two of the suspects contained the name of Howard E. Hunt, a former CIA agent who has served as a paid consultant to Charles W. Colson, a special counsel to Nixon and other White House officials.

O'BRIEN'S SUIT, filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, charged violation of voting rights laws, invasion of privacy and illegal wiretapping by private citizens. It sought $100,000 for physical damages to the party's headquarters suite and $900,000 for the "willful and illegal violation of their (Democrats') constitutional, statutory and civil rights."

John N. Mitchell, the former attorney general who heads the Nixon Re-election Committee said O'Brien's suit was "sheer demogoguery" and "a political stunt." He said the committee was not legally, morally or ethically accountable for actions taken by individuals without its knowledge and beyond the scope of its control."